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FOR H - PLEASE PASS CODEL PRYCE FROM AMBASSADOR CHARLES RIES

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TAGS: [OREP](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [GR](#) [VISIT](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR CODEL PRYCE'S MARCH 29-30 VISIT TO ATHENS

REF: A. STATE 51348

[1](#)B. ATHENS 831

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.

[1](#)1. (U) I want to warmly welcome you to Athens. As you have requested, we have arranged a schedule focused on trafficking in persons. This issue is a high priority for the Embassy. In the short time you have with us, I hope you get a good overview of Greece's efforts to fight this scourge. I look forward to meeting with you, and the Embassy will do all it can to make your visit a productive and enjoyable one.

TIP

[1](#)2. (SBU) Sadly, Greece is a country of transit and destination for women, men, and children who are trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labor. Most women come from Eastern Europe and former Soviet states, and there have been some recent reports of African women victims. Albanian children make up the majority of child victims who are trafficked for forced labor and petty crimes. According to NGO and police officials, the child trafficking phenomenon in Greece continues to diminish as more Albanian parents are able to emigrate to Greece rather than "rent" their children to traffickers. There are also reports of some male victims trafficked from South Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan for forced labor.

[1](#)3. (SBU) During your visit, you will have a meeting with representatives of a wide variety of anti-TIP non-governmental organizations (NGO). Many of these NGOs are recipients of funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The GoG cooperates with NGOs and the new National Action Plan provides for formal meetings between the GoG and NGOs (the most recent occurred March 16). NGOs will likely describe their desire for greater involvement in the critical victim-screening process and greater access to the women's immigrant detention facility near Athens. You will also visit the trafficking shelter of the NGO "Doctors of the World" (MdM), where some potential victims are currently being hosted. Additional information on the specific NGOs you will meet with will be provided in your briefing book.

[1](#)4. (SBU) You will also have the opportunity to meet with government officials during a lunch that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) will host for you. Ambassador Verros, the new national coordinator for anti-trafficking, will describe the efforts made by the government during the past year to fight trafficking. An interministerial council of Secretaries General from relevant ministries has been

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established and in August, the government published the "National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons." The Secretaries General of the Health, Justice, and Public Order

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Ministries, which have primary involvement in the trafficking issue, have been invited to attend the lunch, and will describe the efforts of their ministries in prosecution and prevention. You will also hear "independent" views from the head of the International Office of Migration-Greece (IOM) which is involved in victim repatriation, and the Greek Ombudsman for Children, who provides recommendations to the government related to child trafficking.

[1](#)5. (SBU) During your visit, you will have a brief on-the-record press roundtable event. The invited press will be familiar with the TIP issue. They may express interest in the TIP report tier ranking process and why you chose to visit Greece. We will have embassy experts on hand to address specific issues in Greece. You might take the opportunity of the press briefing to discuss our interest in TIP as a global issue, and efforts in the U.S. to address the problem. Additional Greece-specific talking points will be provided in your briefing book. We see your visit as a good opportunity to underline for the media the USG's broad-based interest in this topic.

Political and Economic Context

16. (SBU) Your visit comes in the aftermath of a highly successful -- but expensive -- Olympic Games last year. We were involved in nearly all aspects of Olympics security, and this close cooperation with the Greek government has paid dividends in other security-related fields. Along with other allies and friends, we congratulated (and continue to praise) Greece for presiding over a safe and secure Games.

17. (SBU) U.S.-educated PM Costas Karamanlis, in power since March 2004, has had little time to bask in the afterglow, however. He now must make tough choices to bring his government's deficit under control, in line with EU policy. He must also confront the painful, but necessary task of making Greece's economy more competitive by privatizing inefficient state industries and attracting foreign investment. Adding to the post-Olympics malaise are recent scandals involving corrupt judges and theft of antiquities, trial-fixing, and other illegal (and immoral) behavior by high-ranking clerics that has shaken the powerful Orthodox Church to its foundations.

18. (SBU) The good news is that our relations with the Greek government are good and getting better, despite policy differences (Iraq, Kyoto, the ICC). Our primary objective now is to find ways to encourage Greece to become a more active partner on our regional and global agendas. This is particularly true given Greece's current two-year (2005-2007) seat on the UN Security Council and willingness to take an active part in resolving long-standing problems in the Balkans -- including the status of Kosovo, the Macedonia name issue, and bringing war criminals to justice.

19. (SBU) One area of continuing concern for us is the issue of domestic terrorism. Greece has made progress in past years convicting key members of the infamous November (N17) terrorist group, responsible for killing many Greeks and five USG employees over the course of its bloody, 30-year history. We are concerned that the December 2004 brutal assassination of a Greek police officer guarding the residence of the British army attach may represent the emergence of a follow-on terrorist group. The Greek justice system's lenient attitude toward N17 and other Greek terrorist convicts -- two were recently released on health grounds -- and continuing violent anarchist activity raise concern about a re-emergence of domestic terror.

Greek Public Opinion

10. (SBU) A word on Greek public opinion and the media generally. The Greek public's negative opinion toward U.S. policy reflects grievances over our perceived historical favoritism toward Turkey, American support for the former Greek military junta, our actions in Iraq, and, most recently, our policy to recognize Macedonia by its constitutional name ("Republic of Macedonia"), which many Greeks saw as a deliberate snub against their historic claims to this designation. Polls bear this out: some 93 percent of Greeks opposed the war in Iraq and a large majority (80 percent) believe the U.S. plays a negative role in the worldwide fight against terrorism (incredibly enough). Some media outlets hype this sort of feeling, broadcasting violent images from Iraq and playing up any perceived slight against Greek interests by the U.S. This prevailing attitude is based on a sense of insecurity about Greece's place in the world and a traditional belief in the country's victimhood at the hands of great powers.

11. (SBU) At the same time, we think this feeling is slowly starting to change. Greeks make up the largest percentage of foreign students in the U.S., related to population, of any EU country. Many Greek elites have a nuanced and balanced view gained from years in the U.S. or from working closely with Americans in business or multilateral institutions. Even the shrillest Greek critic grudgingly accepts the necessity of working closely with the U.S., although few will ever openly support us. The current government has been reluctant to publicly criticize the U.S., which in turn has tempered the Greek media's editorial line toward our policies. Your visit will be seen as part of the normal high-level exchange between our two countries.

Ries